

Fasting: Really, It's Not Meant for Today's Christians, Is It?

What does the Bible say about fasting?

In the biblical sense, fasting is abstaining from food and drink for a *spiritual* reason. The people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast when they recognized their sins (Jonah 3:5). In the New Testament, Christ fasted prior to his encounter with Satan in the wilderness.

Over the years, has the custom of fasting changed much?

Oh, yes, it has. In the early centuries of the Christian Church those to be baptized prepared by fasting for two or three days. And by the year 325 CE, fasting had been extended to forty days, based on Jesus' forty day fast after his baptism. Soon a Lenten fast meant eating only one meal a day with no meat, or fish, and in most places, with no eggs allowed.

Then by the Reformation in the early 1500's, Lenten fasting seemed to many people to have acquired a distorted purpose: simply seeking to earn God's favor. The reformers said that we cannot *earn* God's love. So most protestant churches dropped the observance of fasting altogether.

So how should people fast?

Jesus gives the answer. "When you fast, do not put on a gloomy look like the hypocrites do. . . wash your face so that no one will know except your Father who sees all that is done in secret." (Matt 6:16-17)

One Lenten custom marks the season by "giving up" something like candy or meat or even entire meals. That can be meaningful if we use the money or time for a spiritual purpose. Or we can "take on" something like daily Bible reading, more prayer time, or more frequent church attendance.

Is fasting still for Christians today?

Yes. Our prayer book calls us to observe Lent "by prayer, fasting and self-denial." As Christians, we promise to place the love of God above every other love. Part of the purpose of Lenten self-denial and fasting is to make us gently aware of how far our own hearts can wander from that promise.

Fasting helps us to come to know what really matters to us and to make a connection between giving up something we want and the daily needs of others. Isaiah wrote that the intent of fasting is to "loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke."

LeQuina Knox Gets Doorway Scholarship Four Years, Full Tuition. At Age 13 College Education Assured Early

Lots of 7th graders bring letters home from school. But this past week, **LeQuina Knox**, who's been at this church for most of her 13 years, brought home an exceptional letter from Thurgood Marshall Middle School. It announced that LeQuina had been awarded a Doorways Chair Scholarship for full tuition for four years of college.

"She will attend a community college for two years," her mother, **Ericka Knox**, says, "probably, St. Pete College, and two years at a Florida university – maybe USF."

In the meantime as part of the scholarship package, this teenager ("I'll be fourteen in June," she says) will have a mentor to guide her over the bumps of high school.

And you surely know this young lady. You just can't miss her bright smile, or what her uncle, **Nate Caines**, calls her "beautiful heart."

You probably love her already. "She is just goodness," said **Hazel Hudson** in describing this bubbly young woman.

Quina, her family's nickname for her, was born premature with several disabilities. "She's always been a fighter," said **Theresa Martin**. "It's remarkable how she accepts her disabilities with a sense of challenge."

"I don't know her very well, but I'm intrigued by her." That's how **Michael Griffin** answered when asked his impression of LeQuina. "I see her working very hard to break free of her restrictions in order to achieve her goals."

"She's got a good head on her shoulders," observed **Mattie Austin**. Quina's mother explained, "She's set her mind ever since elementary school on making the honor roll and she made it in the last semester of 5th grade. Quina hasn't been off that list once since then." Now, being on the honor roll consistently, missing few days of school and maintaining the respect of her teachers has won a scholarship for this 7th grader.

"Quina is just bubbling over," said **Ivy Fleming**, her grandmother. "Remember the doctor who told me I'd never walk?" LeQuina asked her grandmother. Then she added, "He should see me now," referring not only to her scholarship but also to the fact that with the assistance of a special walker at school, LeQuina walks.

Ericka has worked from her daughter's early school days to get her "mainstreamed" in classes with all the other kids. "I think that has really benefited LeQuina," observed Hazel. "Now going to college will round out her experience. With an education and her fighting spirit, she'll be able to do anything and everything she wants to."

There is a sense at St. Augustine's that LeQuina's family has, in a sense, won this award also. "They've just always *continued on back page*

This young lady doesn't give up on anything.

She has so much love in her.

For Your Calendar

- Apr 9 **Palm Sunday:** a Traditional Service beginning at Ford Hall at 9 am
Apr 13 **Maundy Thursday:** a Passover Seder Supper at St Augustine's beginning at 5:30 pm
Washing of the feet; Institution of the Last Supper; Stripping of the Altar
Apr 14 **Good Friday:** Good Friday liturgy at St. Matthews at noon with a Community of Celebrants
Stations of the Cross (indoors and out); Fr. Whitlock will preach during the liturgy
Apr 15 **Holy Saturday:** a Deanery-wide Easter Vigil at St. Peter's Cathedral at 8 pm
Apr 16 **Easter** at St. Augustine's beginning at 9 am; A Celebration of Joy
May 21 **Mass on the Beach:** Fort DeSoto Park at 10 am; mass + parish picnic + family, friends & fun

Cards, Anyone?

When will those greeting cards be offered for sale? The best answer is "soon, real soon."

Our Stewardship Committee, chaired by **Louise Stroud**, will work out the details of the how, when and especially who will staff the card display sales venture.

"When I work on something, I like to have the responsibilities clear cut," explained **Mattie Austin**. She and several others are willing to take responsibility for the card display on a rotating basis.

"We're going to need some simple security for the display rack," thought **Tom Krug**. "Just something we can use to snap over the display -- more to discourage anyone from messing around than actually preventing theft."

Casters will soon be attached to the rack unit so that it can be conveniently rolled to other locations "where people gather."

Six Simple Suppers

every Wednesday in Lent
5:30 – 7:00 *

You're All Invited!

and childcare is free

* still time for choir practice!

College Education for LeQuina *continued*

been there for her," said **Greg Duckett**. "I know **George (Fleming, LeQuina's grandfather)** has been instrumental in her life. He loves her dearly."

"And her mother spends a lot of time with her. They do homework together every night," added her Uncle Nate. "It's just beautiful to see."

"Sure, sometimes it's hard," admitted Ivy Fleming. "She's my granddaughter. You go all out for her."

Pat Stewart summed it up well. "This young lady doesn't give up on anything. It's almost like she doesn't know she has these problems and just says 'This is the way I am.' In that way, she's been a model for lots of adults. You look at who she is, what's she's accomplished, and you tell yourself you can do anything too."

"Still Making Strides Toward a Cure"

That's the true story of course, but it's also the theme for the **17th Annual Gala** sponsored by the local chapter of the American Cancer Society's Minority Development Committee.

According to **Mary Jones** "the Cancer Society is working so hard to find cures that we just had to choose that theme this year." The big, dressy Gala is scheduled for the St. Petersburg Hilton on Saturday, April 1. Social hour is 6:30 pm and dinner is at 7.

Inez Ford is the Gala's point person at St. Augustine's and she has your tickets for the grand event. She and Mary hope enough St. Augustine's people buy tickets to fill a table of ten at the event.

"Our parish has always supported ACS," Mary says. "Although I haven't been able to be in church to push this event, I hope people remember how enjoyable our Galas are and how important it is to support ACS and their research."

This Minority Development Committee holds its monthly meetings at St. Augustine's. With noticeable pride in her voice, Mary says that over the past years the Committee has raised "thousands and thousands of dollars" through their annual Galas. "In fact," she says, "more than fifteen thousand each year."

Several of our church members are weekly ACS volunteers and over the years many women from St. Augustine's have served on this Committee. Mary and Inez are our current representatives.

"... **more*** from St. Augustine's" is for members and friends of one courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg, FL. This weekly newsletter is about candor, recognition, spiritual attitude, nixing hearsay and, yes, unashamed cheer leading. Members Judy and Tom Krug are co-editors. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the effort. Every issue is available at the church and online at www.staugstpete.org, our web site for church-shoppers.